

Healthy Tastes Good: Transforming How Kids Eat in Pacific County

The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHS) supports rural Pacific county on the southwest coast of Washington State. It is home to 20,900 people, including 2,944 children under age 15.¹ Childhood obesity is a significant problem in Pacific County. In 2011, the local health department partnered with one school district to start solving it.

Issue

In Pacific County, 32 percent of eighth grade students are either overweight or obese. Most eighth grade students (75 percent) report not eating enough daily fruits and vegetables.² Children in Washington consume up to half of their daily food at school. The Pacific County Public Health and Human Services Department recognized that one way to help kids eat healthier was to improve school meals.

Intervention

The Naselle-Grays River Valley School District in Pacific County enrolls about 300 kids in their elementary, middle, and high school. In 2011, the Pacific County Public Health and Human Services Department received funding from the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant through the Healthy Communities Program at the Washington State Department of Health. Department staff were part of the School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) along with parents and school staff. They used this funding to assist the SHAC in transforming the school breakfast and lunch program at the Naselle-Grays River Valley School District. A successful AmeriCorps grant funded a parent volunteer to serve as a chef in the school kitchen. After the AmeriCorps grant ended, the school district hired the parent volunteer and another chef to continue cooking meals from scratch.

Impact

The Naselle-Grays River Valley School District eliminated processed food from their breakfast and lunch menus. The two chefs now prepare fresh food daily. The menu includes many fruit and vegetable options. The school district is also boosting the local economy through a monthly *Farm to School* menu featuring local produce from neighborhood farms. Recently, the school district received a three-year grant from the Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network to better connect their schools with local farms.

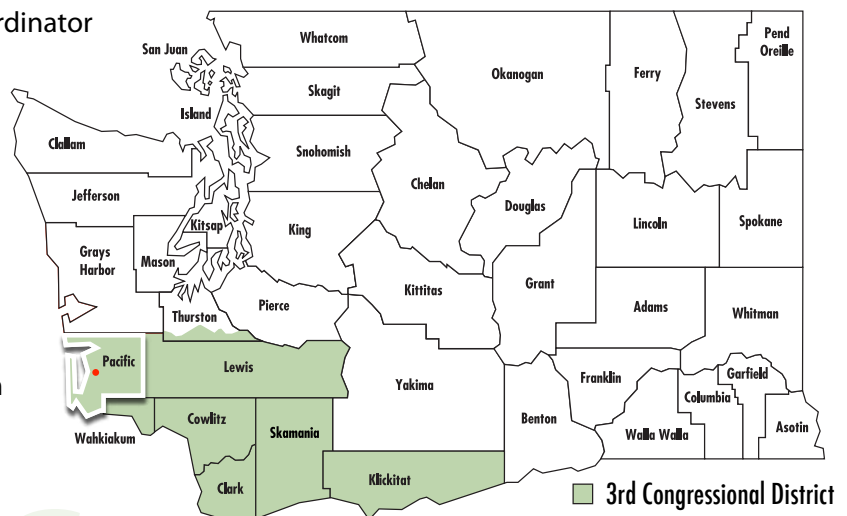
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County population: 20,900

Pacific County Public Health and Human Services

South Bend, Washington
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Pacific



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¹ Washington State Data Book, Pacific County Profile, 2011. Date posted 8/11/2011. www.ofm.wa.gov/databook/pdf/local.pdf. Website accessed on 2/4/13.

² Healthy Youth Survey Factsheets "AskHYS.net." www.askhys.net/layout.asp?page=reports/FactSheets. Website accessed on 2/5/13.

³ Washington State Department of Health, "Healthy Community Environments in Washington State," January 2008. www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/HealthBehaviors/HealthyCommunityEnvironments.aspx. Website accessed 2/6/13.